

OFF-THE-RECORD STATEMENT BY MINISTER R.F. BOTHA AT
A MEETING BETWEEN THE MINISTER AND REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA IN WASHINGTON ON 16 MAY 1981

I am hesitant to go on record about this visit. There are so many matters of a delicate nature which, if we were to discuss them in public at this stage, it would really be counter-productive. There is a very real danger of the constructive potential that I now foresee being eroded and destroyed, and I have no doubt that you will understand. Much that has been discussed in the past two days will require Cabinet sanction and that can only be done next Tuesday. I have an appointment with the Prime Minister early on Monday morning and I do not doubt that you will understand what this means. In other words, I cannot really go on record here and broadcast to the whole world the substance of the talks that I had with the President, General Haig and Mr Allen and various Senators, while I have not yet fully reported to the Prime Minister about these talks.

But quite apart from that, the important factor in my mind now, is that I should be very careful not to say anything in public here which may make the task of the American Government more difficult in endeavouring to find a basis for a negotiated settlement, because in that case they will simply blame me for their difficulties. They will simply say: "In these circumstances you have made it impossible for us". There is a danger that African Governments will start reacting from what they read in the papers; they will start shooting down elements of the 'bottom line' of the proposals of the four Western powers, who, together with the United States form the so-called Five Western Nations Contact Group. They will be coming together in Washington next week. The United States Government will have to brief them and try to persuade them to go along. The Five together will then have to start, as I see it, to talk to Secretary-General Waldheim and the difficult factions within the United Nations. They will have to start talking to the Frontline States at some point; some-

One will have to contact SWAPO. Now, with all this work to be done, I assume that you will clearly understand that difficulty in which I find myself as far as going public is concerned. I have no doubt that you have sympathy with that position. That is why I asked to be taken off the CBS programme "Face the Nation" on Sunday and why I cancelled the appointment with the foreign correspondents today. Quite frankly, I do not see much point in appearing on television here and answering every question so evasively that there is little in it. We have explained the position to them - I think they understand.

Furthermore, I am of the opinion that I have received quite enough publicity here. I do not think that we should make life more difficult for President Reagan or General Haig by over-emphasising what the American media already calls 'normalisation of relations' and so invite negative reaction. I think it is South Africa's interests which are to be considered. What will count will be results, real results and not propaganda results as regards the improvement of relations between our two countries. On that basis, and on the assumption that we continue to inform you of some of the substance of our talks confidentially, I will gladly inform you of the main points. If after that we can perhaps say a few things that you may consider suitable for publication, well and good. We can try to do it that way.

Now as far as my programme is concerned. On arrival on Wednesday morning in New York as I have told you already, I had a very constructive meeting with Mrs Jeane Kirkpatrick, United States Ambassador to the United Nations and her senior aides. The remainder of Wednesday was taken up here in Washington with various appointments, but mostly with the South African Ambassador and his staff and advisers of the Embassy, preparing for Thursday's meeting with General Haig.

I found General Haig to be a very straightforward man. He certainly has a very good and effective grasp, I think, of world affairs. I ascribe this to his years with NATO and his experience in international affairs. I think it is no secret if I tell you that he has no doubt as to the Soviet Union's aims in the world and as far as he is concerned, unless the United States can come up with something effective in the next three or four years, freedom in the world is in real danger. It is interesting that he does not believe that the Soviet Union is the superman, and as invincible, as some of the propaganda put out by the Soviet Union would tend to indicate. I think that is the correct approach. He is prepared to stand up against them. In the first place, I think that is why he would like to see the American military establishment, in military situations, balance the Soviet strength. But he is also, I think, conducting in some form or other, a psychological resistance movement, if I may put it that way. They believe here that the Soviet Union has great problems - is over-extending itself - and what must be done by the West is simply to stand up to it and to start telling the world that this so-called giant is vulnerable, and that there is nothing inevitable about Soviet victory.

Now this is interesting to me: I discussed United States/Soviet relations with Dr Kissinger when I was Ambassador here and subsequently with Dr Brzezinski, and to me it was very interesting to contrast the more philosophical world views of Dr Kissinger and Dr Brzezinski with the down-to-earth approach of General Haig. It is clear that General Haig has respect for Dr Kissinger's views and that he must have learnt a lot from Dr Kissinger. But in my view he is certainly prepared to implement, on a more practical basis, some of the main trends of thought of Dr Kissinger.

This Government - the United States Government - certainly considers Southern Africa as a very important element in the total struggle between super powers. It is quite significant

That four years ago when we talked and spoke here about South Africa's strategic position, there wasn't really a very receptive audience. There were admittedly a number of conservative opinion-makers - House Representatives, Senators, a Governor here and there - who would listen and would agree that the Cape sea route was of great importance to America and that America would need a reliable supply of minerals, especially what we term critical strategic minerals. But four years ago, when you spoke like this in the United States, and I talk from personal experience, there was little understanding of the magnitude and seriousness of the problem. It was as if one did not penetrate with one's words; it was rather that they listened to you and said "Well, thank you very much. Good day and goodbye". There was no real appreciation. One got the impression that the words fell on deaf ears, that you couldn't get through. They did not really care. They did not really share our view or rather allocate the same importance that we did four, five years ago to these arguments that I have just mentioned, regarding the importance of the Cape sea route and the importance of safeguarding and securing the strategic mineral supplies of South Africa for the West.

I can tell you that this has really changed considerably, indeed remarkably: the receptiveness and the importance that is now being attached to these strategic elements regarding South Africa's position and the availability of minerals. The audience is the same, but the importance is now appreciated and recognised. They have, as you know better than I do, this concept of a resource war. If one mentions South Africa as a parallel to the oil fields of the Middle East, I find no problem in Americans now appreciating that and accepting it. Naturally they think in terms of long term planning and substitutes, but everyone I spoke to agreed that it would be expensive to work on substitutes and it might take ten, fifteen or twenty years to find substitutes for some of the critical minerals. I do not have a complete list of them.

We know them more or less: ferro-alloys and then the platinum group of minerals and some of the base metals. The platinum group contains some of the most critical minerals and the Soviet Union, together with South Africa, as you know, possesses a preponderance in respect of just about every one of the critical metals and minerals. So that there is now a great awareness here of the danger to America and the West of the Soviet Union's controlling these resources either directly or through surrogate regimes that are friendly towards the Soviet Union and which might preclude the West from obtaining these minerals. There is a real awareness of this, a real concern and the Americans with whom I spoke make it directly relevant to America's attempts to maintain at least equal power and to balance Soviet military power. They consider it an element in their country's policy of preventing the Soviet Union from gaining further advantages over the West.

I also find that it is a very interesting aspect that the hard facts about Africa are filtering through and have filtered through. Four, five years ago these facts did not make any impression. As a matter of fact, four, five years ago one could not really forecast in this country how successful Africa would eventually be economically. Today, as a result of the increased difficulties of the African states to develop, to get their economies in shape, to make progress in the constructing of infrastructures and as a result of the repeated requests of African states either for their debts to be written off or for new loans to be given them on favourable terms; I suppose because of all this and of the Lagos Conference last year on the economic ills of Africa, World Bank reports, food shortages, appeals to the United Nations to give millions of dollars for Africans - apparently as a result of all this, the facts - hard, realistic painful facts, concerning Africa's economic dilemma - are filtering through.

Knowledgeable Americans are now aware of the unemployment situation in Africa, which is huge. It is startling. Sixty-three million in Africa are unemployed (45% of the total labour force). The total foreign external debt of the African countries is running into 50 thousand million dollars. There is a \$20 billion trade deficit in the offing for the African countries this year. This brings about that people then also start to ask what the position is as regards the constitutions of the African states: the facts about the lack of elections; lack of press freedom; lack of independent judicial systems, and so on. All of this then comes to the fore. Now I do not of course say here today that South Africa should take any joy from the fact that Africa finds itself in disarray. That is not my position because Africa's problems affect us in South Africa. A prosperous Africa, in my opinion, would mean a natural market for South Africa and would directly benefit us. So I want to make it perfectly clear that it is not my view that a poor and retrogressive Africa is to our advantage. But it is a fact that the situation, in the minds of knowledgeable Americans, reflects favourably on South Africa. There is a great contrast: a real economic growth rate of 8% in South Africa last year now means something more than it would have. Our relatively well-developed infrastructure and the relative stability that we have enjoyed, I think, are important factors.

This does not mean that the American Government can support the internal policies of the South African Government. They cannot do so. But I do find an encouraging attitude now instead of the total condemnation of the Carter Government. I now find a recognition on the part of important Americans of what they see as the road adopted by the Prime Minister of South Africa, Mr P.W. Botha. They are remarkably well-informed on the initiatives of the Prime Minister. They are impressed by the changes that have already taken place and have been promised via the field of labour. They are

aware of the attempts of the South African Government to equalise salaries, and of our difficulties in that regard, mainly that you cannot do everything overnight, but they are encouraged by our direction. Yes, it appeals to them. In the field of sport they are aware of what has taken place. They are aware of the opening of restaurants and hotels. They certainly do not regard these changes as cosmetic. They had similar experiences in their country and they are aware of the traumatic process that they went through. They understand better what these things mean. The removal of job reservation determinations - I think there are only two remaining - has impressed them. So taking everything together, I find that the Americans in general are now better informed about the steps taken by the South African Government apropos the reports of the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions, the announcements and pronouncements of the Prime Minister on various aspects of relations between White, Coloured, Asian and Black, than they were four years ago. Taken together, the Prime Minister's pronouncements and the steps of the Government in the fields indicated to you, have impressed them, have encouraged them that things are moving in the right direction in South Africa. While on the one hand they cannot subscribe to the elements of discrimination that still exist in South Africa, they certainly display a readiness to appreciate and recognise the steps taken by the South African Government to move away from humiliating forms of discrimination. It is my impression that if the South African Government can move steadily in the direction indicated by the Prime Minister, the United States Government would not require the South African Government to act in such a way that it loses its political power. It is my impression that the American Government would not wish a situation of instability and conflict to occur. I think that as long as the South African Government can move on the road of the Prime Minister and achieve results - practical results - the Government of the United States will encourage the South African Government and will be able to improve relations with us.

As far as South West Africa is concerned, that is the immediate problem. It is a serious one and it is an urgent one, but General Haig stated (when some of you were present) that there are not going to be time deadlines. I welcome this attitude because it is interesting psychologically. If you hang deadlines like swords over peoples' heads and Governments' heads and parties' heads, very often the desirable results are not achieved. When you do not do it this way you often achieve constructive results in just about the same time-span. General Haig's attitude in this respect, in my opinion, therefore removes the implicit threat which one finds in deadlines. I hope this will contribute towards an atmosphere of less stress and strain and greater calm. And calm is always a useful ingredient in any negotiating process.

You have by now read the Washington Post of today. In a way it is indeed perhaps unfortunate that they did publish that story about South Africa insisting that UNTAG would not be allowed any longer in the Territory. On the other hand, I can tell you that whether it surfaces now or whether it is going to become known in a week's time, the fact is that there is really no way in which we can persuade the internal parties of South West Africa to accept UNTAG. That is, I must make it very clear, the military, the military component of UNTAG. You are aware of the treatment meted out to the DTA in the Security Council. Dr Brand Fourie, who represented South Africa during that meeting of the Security Council, did not specifically say so in his public statement, but he came very close to warning the United Nations that that was what was in the offing; that that was what was to be expected. I can tell you this morning that it was extremely difficult for me to persuade some of the leaders of the internal parties in South West Africa at that time not to pull out altogether and make irrevocable statements to the effect that they would have nothing to do with the UN any longer.

It was difficult, believe me. We had to go all out to prevent leaders from stating that in public. And you know how it works when you are a political leader and you start saying something in public. You are committed to what you have said, that is the way it works! Then it becomes extremely difficult to backpeddle and back-track and I thought it was an achievement of considerable proportions for us to have succeeded in persuading the leaders of the more important internal parties not to make statements to the effect that they would have nothing further to do with the United Nations or with any UN role in the Territory. We persuaded them not to say anything, and before I came here we obtained the acquiescence of some of these leaders to an attitude that the UN could still send civilian observers to the Territory and thus play the original role which was foreseen for the UN, namely to satisfy itself that the process leading to independence would be fair, free and without intimidation. I say that I consider it a remarkable achievement that we succeeded in this, because if we had not, I could not have come to Washington. Realising that the United States and the Five, to say the least, would not be able to support any proposal's bottom line on the part of the internal parties, and for that matter South Africa, which excluded altogether and completely any role for the United Nations, we tried to save that situation. And this is all that it is about. I do not blame the Washington Post for this report. It is an accurate report. What I want to say to you is that I do not think that I agree with the negative implications in the report.

I think I owe it to you to say that we intimated this to the Americans when Dr Crocker was in Pretoria - categorically and clearly - and we did inform the other Four Western Governments as well. I regret to find that Dr Crocker is perhaps upset by the report, but, if he is now upset about it, he is going to be equally upset about it in a week's time because it is impossible to keep this kind of thing

secret. I cannot return home and be asked by DTA, AKTUR and other parties, and the Prime Minister and my colleagues: "Did you tell the Americans this" and then have to answer "No I did not". It would have been an impossible situation. There is no way I can keep this secret. So either the Five accept at this time that this is the proposal's bottom line situation or they do not. But I thought that I wanted to make use of this opportunity, because of the basis of confidentiality which I believe exists between our press and myself, to explain that they were informed about it as early as during Dr Crocker's visit to Pretoria. In our talks here I told General Haig this categorically. Dr Crocker was informed again yesterday at the rounding-off talks, by Dr Fourie, when we spelled it out in clear terms, because I believe it is better that the American Government understands very clearly that there are certain things which we would not be able to accept. They must understand this now, instead of us moving a certain distance and then discovering we cannot continue and their coming back to us and asking concessions. They must understand that this is a bottom line. It is not the old story of asking a bit more in order to come back to a fall-back position. That is not the case. That is why, in my opinion, it would be better to stop all attempts at finding an internationally acceptable solution now, than to proceed on a false basis or a basis on which they can turn around later and say: "You deceived us".

That is one thing I must state to you emphatically this morning: I am not going to be a party to any process which might hurt the decent President of this country. Because President Reagan would get hurt if the Americans resume efforts to find a settlement and move a certain distance only to discover that there was a misunderstanding. That is why it is of extreme importance that there must be clarity between the two governments as to our bottom line, as they call it, and I can say to you that there can be no doubt a-

about the elements of this bottom line. This is to be conveyed in clear terms to our friends in this country. So I do not take too seriously the implication in the report in the Washington Post that South Africa's insistence on the absence of UNTAG is a new element which will necessarily complicate things. Nobody, after the Security Council meeting, expected South Africa or the internal parties to accept UNTAG, and the Western Powers were certainly told of this in good time. As far as other elements are concerned, they are known to you: regular elections will have to be guaranteed, the rights of minority groups will have to be guaranteed. I want to repeat, South Africa does not insist on a constitution in fine print, spelling out in great detail all the elements. We are flexible. We do not mind in what form this is done, as long as it is done. That is why I have said it can be a declaration of rights, or a manifesto. It does not matter, as long as these elements are in it beforehand, mainly for protection: the guarantee of minority rights, a guarantee that there would be regular elections, etc.

As General Haig put it to me "not one man, one vote, once". That was the way he put it.

I really believe that the United States would not wish to have a Marxist Government in Namibia and that is why they have agreed to this concept of non-alignment, which is another point. As I understand that concept it would mean that an independent Namibia would not conclude military or political treaties, allying itself to one of the identifiable power blocs of the world. That is how I would understand that interpretation.

I think it is a positive point.

So to sum up as far as South West Africa is concerned, I think as a result of General Haig's basis - regular elections, non-alignment, guarantees of minority rights, recognition of South African concerns in this respect and therefore of the internal parties, progress is possible. I found also that they would be willing to consider, not perhaps immediately, but as soon as is feasible and practicably possible, themselves talking with the internal parties.

Then there is General Haig's understanding of not imposing deadlines. Taking all of this together, I think a real potential now exists to move forward to start or restart negotiations with a view to seeking an internationally acceptable solution. I did not say that it would be successful or unsuccessful. I merely said that I think there exists a sufficient basis to proceed along this course with sincerity and all due speed.

As far as nuclear matters are concerned, we also discussed this subject. This is an extremely delicate field - it is a classified field, and I hope you won't ask any questions because the United States do find themselves in a very difficult position. As regards this Government - it is faced with legislation introduced by other governments and even if it displays a willingness and readiness to assist us in respect of some of our difficulties, they have certain practical problems. They have a Congress, they have to go through certain processes. I have an understanding of the problem. I do hope there is not going to be a public debate about this nuclear story. It is a sensitive matter. I can only say to you that a way out will be very difficult to find, and I want to leave it at that.

Matters of a bilateral nature were discussed, which I would not like to reveal. If the United States side wants to reveal them to you, then they take the responsibility. And I appeal to you, leave it at that. The matters raised

are still subject to discussion. But there are, I can tell you, in confidence, a number of positive indicators.

So by and large, I can tell you that I consider that this was a very worthwhile visit. The Americans gave me sufficient time to explain fully the direction of the South African Government and the objectives of the South African Government. The President of the United States gave me an opportunity to put to him more salient features of what the South African Government stands for and also to inform him of some of the important elements in the Southern African situation. I met with Senator Percy, the lady Senator, Mrs Kassebaum - a very attractive lady - and also the minority leader Senator Pell, Senators Hayakawa, Helms, Cohen, Byrd at various sessions. I met with Mr Allen, I had a very valuable talk with him. I met last night with representatives of most important media in this country, informally for a couple of hours at dinner, I saw Senator Laxalt for a very interesting discussion, most rewarding. I also met with the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Transport, and the Secretary of Labour, and with Congressman Jack Kemp of New York. I met with the US Ambassador to the United Nations, four or five Cabinet Ministers, the President, the top Senators. I feel that, although I cannot go back with concrete results at this present moment - I did not expect that - the foundation has been laid which makes it possible to achieve more friendly relations not only to the mutual benefit of South Africa and the United States, but also to the benefit of the whole Southern Africa, including the Black states of Southern Africa. I repeat this and emphasise this - the Black states of Southern Africa.